Balochistan police chief claims drop in terror attacks

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Coordinated action by police, security forces and other law enforcement agencies helped reduce terrorist attacks during the past year, Balochistan's top police officer said on Wednesday and vowed to further strengthen the force in 2026 through improved planning, modern weapons and specialised training.

Addressing a press conference at the Central Police Office on the last day of 2025, Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir said attacks were foiled in Gwadar, Quetta, Bagh, Jhal Magsi police station areas and Panjgur with support from other security agencies. DIG Headquarters Hassan Asad Alvi and AIG Operations Capt (retd) Naveed Alam were also present.

He said the police response would be further strengthened through training, provision of weapons and other requirements. The IGP said the force would enhance its operational capacity in the coming year, ensure merit-based recruitment across departments and improve mechanisms for policing.

"We have plans to develop police on modern lines," he said, referring to the merger of the Levies into the police to create "one well-trained and effective force". IGP Tahir said a stricter crackdown would be launched in the New Year against criminal elements across all districts, with a special focus on dangerous gangs, habitual offenders and organised criminal groups. "Anti-social elements will be dealt with under a zero-tolerance policy," he said.

He said the scope of the Crime Branch would be expanded across Balochistan, with offices established to provide services "at people's doorsteps". He said a Security Division had been set up and around 1,000 police personnel had been redeployed after being withdrawn from VIP duties to areas facing staff shortages. He said the strength of the Anti-Terrorist Force (ATF) would be increased from 1,500 to 3,000 personnel.

Work had begun to improve the infrastructure of 81 police stations, while 30 database centres would be established by 2026, he said, adding that the IT sector would be strengthened. The Safe City project had been completed in Quetta and would be extended to Gwadar and other areas, he said. Bulletproof vehicles had been provided by the federal interior ministry and the provincial government, while the police would also procure vehicles through self-financing.

The IGP said training on modern lines to counter terrorism was under way with support from the Pakistan Army. Training of Levies personnel merged into the police had started at the Police Training College and the Regional Training Centre, Khuzdar, while newly recruited police personnel would also receive training from the army. He said training schools were being established for the CID, intelligence wing and other departments.

He said accountability mechanisms, checks and balances, and a system of rewards and punishments were being implemented, adding that the Crime Branch and the Special Crime Investigation Wing (SCIW) were resolving "blind cases", prompting an expansion of their operations across the province.

Highlighting operational figures, IGP Tahir said police responded to attacks in Jhal Magsi, Tasp, Panjgur, Nag and Mashkeel. During 2025, police registered 1,438 weapons cases, arrested 1,447 suspects and seized 1,483 pistols, 118 Kalashnikovs, 187 rifles and shotguns, 39,786 rounds of ammunition, 21.98 kilograms of explosives and 1,175 magazines.

He said police registered 1,507 cases and arrested 1,589 suspects, seizing 3,903.991kg of hashish, 1,781.088kg of opium, 20.55kg of heroin, 252.448kg of ice (methamphetamine), 2.391kg of crystal, 570kg of sheesha, 4,564 bottles of liquor and 3,904 beer cans.

CHIEF of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir poses with participants of the 18th National Workshop on Balochistan at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.—PPI

Indian proxies disrupting peace in Balochistan: CDF

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and Zehri, and repeated acts of sabotage against infrastructure associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The aggravation in the security situation in Balochistan, besides being a law and order issue rooted in local grievances, is part of a broader pattern of state-sponsored terrorism directed from India for undermining peace and security, as well as targeting strategic projects such as CPEC and weakening Pakistan's sovereignty.

'Committed to peace'

The CDF underscored that while Pakistan remains committed to regional peace and stability, restraint should not be mistaken for weakness.

He emphasised that any violation of Pakistan's territorial integrity, "whether direct or indirect", would draw a firm response — a phrase widely understood in Islamabad as a reference to India's alleged use of proxy terrorist groups.

India's intelligence agency, Research Analysis Wing (RAW), has been providing financial, logistical and training support to Baloch insurgent outfits, particularly the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

In 2025, the military re-designated such outfits as "Fitna al-Hindustan", explicitly framing them as instruments of Indian hybrid warfare rather than a legitimate movement.

Field Marshal Munir said the armed forces remained fully committed to protecting the lives and well-being of citizens, adding that security operations in Balochistan were being conducted alongside efforts to safeguard development projects and civilian populations.

Under a multipronged counterterrorism strategy, including the "Azm-e-Istehkam" framework, security forces have carried out intelligence-based operations across several districts of the province over the past few years, dismantling militant networks, seizing weapons and eliminating insurgents.

Alongside military action, the government has pursued diplomatic efforts to expose India's destabilising role in Balochistan, sharing evidence with the United Nations and friendly countries.

Islamabad views recent international steps, including the designation of the BLA as a terrorist organisation by the United States in 2025, as strengthening its narrative.

The army chief's remarks also come in the context of heightened regional tensions following the brief India-Pakistan military confrontation in May 2025.

Punjab leads wheat sowing as Rabi campaign nears completion

ISLAMABAD: Punjab is leading the wheat sowing campaign for Rabi 2025-26, with sowing completed on time and 90 per cent achieved under early sowing, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research announced on Wednesday.

The second meeting of the National Wheat Oversight Committee, held here on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, reviewed wheat sowing progress, current wheat stocks and the status of implementation of the interim national wheat policy.

The ministry has yet to finalise the national wheat policy, which has been under consideration for several months. The federal government has set a wheat production target of over 30 million tonnes for the Rabi season 2025-26, anticipating no shortage of water in Punjab and Sindh — the two major wheat-growing provinces.

Punjab's production target has been fixed at 26m tonnes from an area of about 20m acres. Sindh is expected to produce 4.43m tonnes, while targets for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan stand at 1.71m tonnes and 1.69m tonnes, respectively.

The committee reviewed province-wise wheat sowing progress and noted that Punjab has witnessed a significant increase in the use of certified wheat seed, along with higher uptake of urea fertiliser, largely due to improved availability and comparatively lower prices.

In Sindh, wheat sowing progress was described as satisfactory and has surpassed sowing targets. In Balochistan, sowing remains lower due to insufficient rainfall; however, the shortfall is expected to be covered following upcoming rains.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a substantial portion of sowing has been completed, although sowing in snow-bound areas is delayed. Overall, wheat sowing targets across all provinces are expected to be achieved. —Amin Ahmed

Bank holiday

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan will remain closed for public dealing on Thursday (Jan 1), which will be observed as 'bank holiday'.

All banks/DFIs/MFBs will, therefore, remain closed for public dealing. However, all employees will attend office as usual.—Staff Reporter

'Media faced extreme punitive actions in 2025'

CPNE report says five journalists were killed, six faced cases and arrests; urges govt to end violence against media persons

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) raised serious concerns over the state of media freedom in the country, saying that journalists and media organisations faced extreme pressure, censorship and punitive actions throughout 2025 despite tight state control over information.

According to CPNE's annual Media Freedom Report 2025, released by its Press Freedom and Monitoring Committee on Wednesday, journalists continued to face killings, arrests, treason cases, harassment and economic pressure between January 1 and December 31, 2025. The report said that blocking of bank accounts, cancellation of national identity cards, inclusion of names in the Exit Control List (ECL) and suspension of government advertisements were widely used to silence critical voices.

The report referred to growing uniformity in print and electronic media content, which has raised serious questions about the independence of journalism in Pakistan. As a result, it said, Pakistan's global ranking on media freedom had further declined. In the 2025 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Pakistan fell six places to 158th position, compared to 152nd in 2024.

The CPNE said that strict government policies, misuse of the PECA law, controlled advertising policies, press advice and censorship forced many newspapers to shut down. Newsrooms of major media groups had become largely empty due to downsizing and layoffs. Despite this, journalists continued to face violence and legal action. Several well-known TV anchors, including Kashif Abbasi, Habib Akram, Paras Jahanzaib, Samina Pasha, Sami Ibrahim, Arif Hameed Bhatti and Khalid Jamil were taken off air or compelled to leave their jobs, said the report.

The report also mentioned the Dawn Media Group, which lost government advertisements across print, electronic and radio platforms due to its independent editorial policy, while Jang, Awaaz and Waqt groups also faced severe pressure, leading to staff cuts.

During 2025, the CPNE said five journalists were killed, six faced cases or arrests, three were harassed, two press conferences were stopped, two media offices were attacked, and two major digital restrictions were imposed. One controversial legislation also severely affected freedom of expression, it said.

The CPNE expressed particular concern over the situation in Balochistan, where unofficial censorship, news blackouts and long internet shutdowns have badly damaged print media, pushing many newspapers close to closure.The report condemned all violations and urged federal and provincial governments to end violence and illegal actions against journalists, review restrictive laws and ensure freedom of expression in line with the Constitution and international democratic standards.

Pakistan backs dialogue amid Yemen tensions: FO

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called on PM Shehbaz at the Prime Minister's House on Wednesday, where regional and global developments were discussed, the PM Office said. The prime minister reiterated the need to maintain peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy.

He expressed satisfaction over bilateral relations and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further deepening ties, while appreciating Saudi Arabia's support for Pakistan and its role in promoting regional peace and stability, the statement said.

The prime minister recalled his meetings with the crown prince during the year, which he said had been highly productive and contributed significantly to elevating Pak-Saudi ties to new levels.

He also expressed deep appreciation for Saudi Arabia's consistent support to Pakistan in times of need and its constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability.

Ambassador Al-Malkiy conveyed greetings from the Saudi leadership and reiterated the kingdom's desire to expand cooperation with Pakistan in all areas of mutual interest.

Sadiq, Jaishankar shake hands in high-level contact

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against Pakistan, including steps to downgrade ties and closure of the main border transit point.

Among the measures, New Delhi's move to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) drew particular attention.

The 1960 World Bank-brokered agreement has endured through wars and decade of hostility, and any move to hold it in abeyance has been viewed in Islamabad as a serious escalation.

On May 7, India launched air strikes in Punjab and Azad Kashmir, triggering a four-day conflict that included retaliatory actions and exchanges targeting airbases. A ceasefire was reached on May 10.

In June, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, an organisation that provides a framework for international disputes, issued a supplemental award on competence, stating that India could not unilaterally hold the IWT in abeyance. Earlier this month, Pakistan's Foreign Office accused India of "weaponising water" after abrupt variations in the flow of the Chenab and Jhelum rivers, which officials said had raised concerns among farmers in Punjab.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has said the arbitration forum reaffirmed the treaty's validity and its dispute-resolution mechanisms, and cited concerns raised by UN rapporteurs over India's actions related to the pact.

Petrol, diesel prices

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High-speed diesel is mainly used in the heavy transport sector and large generators. However, the government is currently charging around Rs80 per litre petroleum levy and carbon tax on these fuels.

The price reduction comes as the prices in the international market have dropped significantly to almost a four-year low in December 2025 amid talks of peace in Ukraine.

The prices of other deregulated petroleum fuels, including the kerosene oil, light diesel oil (LDO) and the jet fuels, used by the aviation industry, air force and helicopters, have also been reduced.

On the other hand, Ogra has notified an increase in Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) prices for January 2026. According to the official notification issued by Ogra, the maximum LPG consumer price for January 2026 has been fixed at Rs219,677.51 per tonne, translating into Rs2,592.19 per 11.8 kg domestic cylinder.

This reflects an increase of Rs10,686.11 per tonne compared to December 2025, when the consumer price stood at Rs208,991.40 per tonne. Ogra stated that LPG prices are linked with Saudi Aramco Contract Prices (CP) and the US dollar exchange rate.

During January, the Saudi Aramco CP increased by 6.74 per cent compared to the previous month.

Although the average exchange rate of the US dollar declined slightly by 0.14 per cent, the impact of the higher CP outweighed the marginal currency relief. As a result, the consumer LPG price has been increased by Rs10.68 per kg. At the same time, Ogra asked the consumers to report overcharging and irregular practices to ensure compliance across the LPG supply chain.

Rules tweaked to use facial, iris scans

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said the system is currently available at its registration centres and on the Pak-ID mobile application for services within its jurisdiction.

It added that it was already being used for biometric verification in the transfer of Islamabad-registered vehicles and for online passport applications.

In the near future, proof-of-life certificates for federal government pensioners will also be issued under this system, while the scope of digital services is being expanded in phases as well.

Procedure

Under the procedure, if fingerprint-based verification fails at a service provider's end, the citizen will visit the nearest Nadra registration centre for a fresh photograph.

The photograph will be matched with the one already available in Nadra's records. Upon successful verification, Nadra will issue a certificate stating the purpose of verification, containing the citizen's recent photograph as well the one on record, CNIC number, name, father's name, a unique tracking ID, and a QR code.

The certificate will be valid for seven days and will be submitted to the relevant institution, which will incorporate it into its records and verify it online through Nadra.

In the coming months, facial image-based biometric verification certificates will also be available through Nadra's e-Sahulat franchises. Following the formal launch of the Digital ID, the facility will be extended to all services through the Pak-ID application.

In the statement, Nadra said it was fully prepared to implement this system. However, for its effective execution, the authority requested regulators, relevant public institutions and private sector organisations to "progressively upgrade their hardware and software in accordance with approved standards to enable the use of this biometric verification service".

In the first phase, institutional software applications will need technical upgrades to integrate facial recognition-based verification certificates issued by Nadra.

In the second phase, institutions will need to install cameras at service counters or integrate them into existing know-your-customer biometric machines.

Without these upgrades, Nadra will not be able to provide the facility directly at such locations.

If citizens encounter any issues regarding the availability of the service after Jan 20, they may lodge complaints with the relevant institution, as the facility will be available from Nadra's end.

Nadra has also requested the interior ministry to issue necessary instructions to the institutions concerned for ensuring early operationalisation of the system.

Faded fingerprints

Following the rollout of this system, Nadra expects that the problems faced by citizens whose fingerprints fade due to age or medical conditions will be resolved.

The authority noted that due to age or certain medical conditions, the fingerprints of many citizens gradually fade over time.

These citizens often face significant difficulties when accessing services at banks, SIM card franchises, housing societies or during property transfers — where fingerprint-based biometric verification is mandatory.

Upon full implementation, citizens will be able to avail this facility directly at the relevant institution without the need to visit a Nadra registration centre.

Following the formal launch of the Digital ID, citizens will also be able to access this facility independently through the Pak-ID application.

Moreover, at many service points, biometric verification is also not possible due to the use of substandard or low-quality fingerprint readers.

Nadra noted that while the State Bank of Pakistan and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority have prescribed mechanisms to facilitate such citizens, challenges persist in practice.

To address the issue, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi had issued directives to Nadra, and key measures have been taken in compliance.

ICAP

TENDER NOTICE

(Civil Works Contractors)

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) invites applications from reputable and experienced **civil contractors** registered in **PEC Category C3** for participation in the tender for a construction and development project located **in Hayatabad, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**.

Qualification Requirements:

- Valid **PEC Registration** in appropriate category with relevant specialization codes.
- Minimum **7 years' experience** in building / RCC / industrial and commercial construction of the similar scale.
- Successful completion of similar projects of comparable nature with minimum covered area of **70,000 sq. ft.**
- Proof of **similar completed projects** during last 5–7 years.
- **Financial soundness:** bank certificate and audited financial statements of the last three years.
- Availability of **qualified technical staff** and necessary construction equipment.
- Valid **NTN, KPRA/GST registration**, and affidavit of **no litigation / not blacklisted.**

Description of Item	Earnest Money	Tender/RFP Collection (Date/Time)	Tender/RFP Submission (Date/Time)	Technical & Financial Bid Opening (Date / Time)
Construction and development of new building.	2% of total bid amount	05-01-2026 10:00 am To 05:00 pm	23-01-2026 10:00 am To 01:00 pm	27-01-2026 11:00 am

Interested and qualified firms may obtain the tender documents from the undersigned during office hours (0900 hrs to 1700 hrs) upon payment of **Rs. 2,000/- (Rupees Two Thousand Only)** in the form of a Pay Order, Demand Draft, or Cheque in favor of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan.

The financial and technical proposals must be submitted in separate envelops to the undersigned on or before the prescribed deadline

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